



Am I drinking too much?

The NHS recommends no more than fourteen units a week, spread over three or more days. A small glass of wine contains 1.5 units; a half pint of beer typically contains 1 unit. More details can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alcohol-misuse/>

You could be misusing alcohol if:

- you feel you should cut down on your drinking
- other people have been criticising your drinking
- you feel guilty or bad about your drinking
- you need a drink first thing in the morning
- you use alcohol to feel confident

Many of us enjoy an alcoholic drink as part of our socialising or to relax. It can give us a feeling of confidence and help us unwind. Alcohol is, however, a poison and when we overuse it, it causes significant problems. When we drink to excess it can expose us or others to harm or we can become addicted and unable to function without alcohol.

Why we misuse alcohol:

Drinking to relieve stress

Many people will have a drink to relieve stress at the end of a trying day. This can be effective, but the danger is that one drink can turn into several and become a daily habit. It can also become difficult to relax without the depressant effect of alcohol.



Union Baptist Church
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Drinking to numb our pain

Some people turn to alcohol in an attempt to “drown their sorrows”, drinking until they stop caring or their mind is so fuddled that they cannot remember. This may be a short-term fix, but the problems are still there when we sober up and it takes an increasing amount of alcohol to achieve oblivion over time. Rather than solving the initial distress, excessive drinking just creates more problems.

Socialising

There can be a culture of drinking to excess in some friendship groups. This binge drinking often leads to severe intoxication and a subsequent loss of control. Alcohol is a sedative which affects our ability to think rationally and make wise choices. This can result in dangerous behaviour, such as drinking and driving, unprotected sex or violence.

Addiction

When we lose control of our drinking and have an excessive desire to drink, it is known as dependent drinking or alcoholism. This addiction makes it impossible to stop drinking without physical and psychological effects.

Physical effects of alcohol misuse

Short term physical effects – Drinking large amounts of alcohol can result in increased risk taking, which can lead to accidents or leave us open to abuse. It can cause vomiting and may result in a severe headache (hangover) and can lead to alcohol poisoning and loss of consciousness.

Long term physical effects – Excessive consumption of alcohol over a long period is very damaging to our health, causing heart disease, strokes, liver disease, many cancers and other diseases.

Other effects of alcohol misuse

Relationship problems – Drinking to excess reduces our ability to control our behaviour and can lead to angry outbursts and broken promises. We can end up hurting those we love, and relationships may be irreparably broken, particularly when intoxication leads to violent or irrational behaviour.

Financial difficulties - not only is alcohol itself expensive, but alcohol misuse may ultimately lead to unemployment, causing further difficulty.

Managing alcohol intake

It is not easy to change our behaviour when we are alcohol dependent. Help such as counselling may well be needed to tackle the underlying problems that caused us to turn to alcohol in the first place. Giving up alcohol may also cause withdrawal symptoms. It is important to speak to your doctor before quitting abruptly. Quitting is less likely to cause physical symptoms for binge drinkers, but the social impact may be greater. The following tips may help you to reduce your intake:

- Have your alcoholic drink after starting to eat
- Quench your thirst with non-alcoholic drinks before having an alcoholic one
- Have a non-alcoholic drink before every alcoholic drink
- Switch to low-alcohol beer
- Plan activities or tasks at those times that you usually drink
- When bored or stressed have a physical workout instead of drinking
- Explore new interests - cinema, a club, exercise
- Avoid routinely going to the pub after work or having a drink immediately you return home.

SOURCES OF HELP

One Recovery Bucks (Drug & Alcohol Services) The service is free and confidential, and aims to enable individuals to make the changes that they want to make, whether that is to reduce or completely stop their use. If you are looking for advice or support, call: 0300 7729 672, or use the online referral form on the website.

Address: Oasis House, George Street, High Wycombe

HP11 2RZ

Phone Number: 0300 7729 672

Email address: ORB@sssft.nhs.uk

Website: www.onerecoverybucks.org

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no fees for AA membership. If you think you have a problem with drinking and want to find out more:

For the national AA helpline, call 0800 9177 650

email help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

There are a number of AA meetings in High Wycombe. Further details can be found here:

<https://aachilternthames.org.uk/aa-meetings-high-wycombe>

Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire is there for anyone whose life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking, and offers meetings in all major towns and cities.

Helpline (7 days a week): 0800 0866 811

Website: <https://www.al-anonuk.org.uk>

Drinkaware (Alcohol advice charity): www.drinkaware.co.uk

Drinkline national alcohol helpline: 0300 123 1110

Counselling Services

The Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) is the only Christian UK-wide counselling organisation holding an Accredited Register with the Professional Standards Authority. For further details see their website:

www.acc-uk.org

The website of the **British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists** may also be helpful:

www.bacp.co.uk

ALCOHOL AND FAITH

Alcohol is one of God's good gifts, but one that can be abused. Opinions on drinking vary among Christians: some choose to abstain entirely, but it is certainly not forbidden in Scripture. Indeed, alcohol features positively in celebrations (eg. Gen.14:18-20, Deut.14:26, Isaiah 25:6). In Ecclesiastes 9:7 we read **"Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do."** Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11); at the Last Supper, Jesus took wine with the disciples, saying **"Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."** (Mark 23:25).

However, Scripture is clear that drunkenness is a sin. In Galatians 5:21 Paul writes **"Envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will**

not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. 5:21). When we are under the control of alcohol, we lack self-control.

Proverbs 23:29-35 clearly describes someone with an alcohol problem. Similarly, Isaiah 5:11 describes someone whose life revolves around alcohol: **“Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine.”** Excessive drinking often stems from unhappiness, and the temptation to self-medicate with alcohol. If you are reading this leaflet because you realise that you have a problem with alcohol, don't be ashamed to seek help. Share and pray with a fellow believer or your pastor and you may want to consider seeking professional or specialist help. The verses overleaf may be helpful if you are struggling with your drinking.

In social situations involving alcohol, all Christians should be careful of negatively impacting others who struggle in this area. In Romans 14:21, Paul urges Christians to abstain from alcohol in situations where doing so could cause fellow believers to stumble. Alcohol is a gift and a blessing, but one to enjoy with caution and sensitivity to others.

VERSES FROM THE BIBLE

1 Corinthians 10:13 **“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.”** God promises that He will always show us a way out of temptation; resolve to take that way out when it is offered.

James 5:16 **“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”** If your relationship with alcohol is sliding out of control, be honest with yourself and with God. Share your struggle with a fellow believer or your pastor for prayer and encouragement.

Matthew 6:34 **“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”** The pressure of having to face life without drinking may be overwhelming. Just focus on the present. Decide that you will not have a drink *today*.

Philippians 4:13 **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”** Christ is always there for you; look to Him to give you the strength you need.

Romans 12:2 **“Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”** Seek to renew your mind through your reading and thinking habits. Dwell on God and His Word rather than on your problems.

2 Corinthians 10:5 **“...we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”** As you find your mind turning to alcohol, consciously redirect your thoughts, perhaps to a specific verse.

Galatians 5:1 **“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”** Alcohol may enslave us, but Christ came to set us free. Stand firm in Christ. Lift your focus away from the struggle not to drink, and fix your eyes on Jesus.

Hebrews 12:2 **“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith”** Shift your focus from yourself to Jesus.